

## **40 Years Ago On Kahoolawe, A Faith Is Reborn**

Civil disobedience that sought to reclaim Kahoolawe from its use as a naval bombing range wasn't the only significant event on the small island four decades ago.

January 8, 2016 · By [Kahuna Palani Nobriga](#)

On this 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Hawaiian civil disobedience actions on Kahoolawe, two [historical accounts](#) of those events appeared in recent days in Civil Beat.

While accurate as far as they go, there is more to the story.

When King Kamehameha I united the islands into one Kingdom, he maintained his dedication to the traditional faith of the Hawaiian people. At his headquarters at Ahuena within the Puuhonua Hale O Keawe at Honaunau, he built a Temple of Lono.

After the death of the king, the traditional faith was actively suppressed.

The suppression included the Moe Kolohe Laws that made many practices of the traditional faith, such as ancestor worship, illegal. Those violating the laws could be sent to penal colonies — Kahoolawe for men and Lanai for women — and severely abused.

More than 100 years later, in 1971, a kahuna or priest emerged to publicly practice the traditional faith. Temuela Hoopi Otarani Otamatahiti Tahuna Pari Tu Po Paki/Lono, commonly referred to as Kahuna Sam Lono, practiced laau lapaau — healing with herbs.

Five years later, the actions remembered in the two articles referenced above were underway. Kahuna Lono found the dedication and activism of the young people encouraging because aloha aina or love and respect for the land was being presented as an alternative to blowing up Kahoolawe, as the U.S. Navy had been doing for decades. At that time, he also taught Hawaiian religion as part of the University of Hawaii summer courses.

### **'I Can Get You On The Island'**

At one point in 1976, Kahuna Lono found himself in Queen's Hospital with a broken hip. One of the interns treating him was Noa Emmett Aluli, one of the Kahoolawe Nine.

When the U.S. military arrested Walter Ritte and George Helm, Emmett Aluli came to Kahuna Lono for help.

Kahuna Lono responded: "I can get you on the island." At that point, most of the activists were unaware that their traditional faith even existed.

Kahuna Lono, assisted by his partner Robert Hudson, wrote a letter to the Navy stating that, protected by the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, the kahuna would be going to Kahoolawe to rededicate the Temple of Ku at Hakioawa. This letter was the first time in more than 100 years that anyone has asserted the right to to practice the traditional faith.

The U.S Navy stood aside for Uncle Lono and assisted him in going to the island for the re-dedication of the temple.

The kahuna left his hospital bed and traveled to Kohoolawe. He brought with him a kuula, which was a sandstone carving of an image in a sitting position that came from the Puuhonua Lehua at Moo Kapu (Pyramid Rock). This image was photographed and recorded by professor Kenneth Emory of the University of Hawaii who was also an archaeologist at the Bishop Museum. The kuula was placed at the Temple of Ku at Hakioawa.

When Kahuna Lono left the island, the Navy reasserted its authority to ban anyone else from coming. The civil disobedience resumed.

The United States' recognition of the traditional Hawaiian faith as still existing laid one more important stone on the pathway of faith renewal that continues to be built today, as evidenced by the current spiritual challenge to the Thirty Meter Telescope.